

White Bass Runs

Department attempts to revive legendary fishery

By Lee McClellan

WAFTS OF PIPE smoke float up the cliffs of Rankin Bottoms on the Dix River on an early April day. The clang of galvanized steel against rocks punctuates the gentle whispering of anglers lining the banks of the river, which flows downstream into Herrington Lake. The plunk of a metal top opening precedes the swoosh of water draining from the inner liner of the minnow bucket. An angler impales a minnow on a bronze hook dangling two feet beneath a cork bobber, then casts his rig into the water.

The cork disappears soon afterward. The

angler's fishing rod bends into the handle from the weight of a 14-inch white bass. The wispy rod jumps all over as the fish uses the current and its wide, flat body to fight, but it soon comes to hand.

The angler reaches for his stringer, but discovers he left it at home. He improvises: The angler sharpens a piece of green tree branch, then pokes the end through the fish's gills and out of its mouth. The white bass slides down to a fork in the stick. The angler then shoves the stick in the river mud.

"Nice one," says a nearby angler. "He'll eat good."